

Barbour Ralph Henry

The Crimson Sweater



Ralph Barbour
The Crimson Sweater

«Public Domain»

Barbour R.

The Crimson Sweater / R. Barbour — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| CHAPTER I | 5 |
| CHAPTER II | 10 |
| CHAPTER III | 15 |
| CHAPTER IV | 18 |
| CHAPTER V | 22 |
| CHAPTER VI | 27 |
| CHAPTER VII | 31 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 35 |

Barbour Ralph Henry

The Crimson Sweater

CHAPTER I

THE CRIMSON SWEATER'S FIRST APPEARANCE

"Hello, Lobster!"

The boy in the crimson sweater raised a pair of blue eyes to the speaker's face and a little frown crept into the sun-burned forehead; but there was no answer.

"Where'd you get that sweater?"

The older boy, a tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested youth of nineteen, with a dark, not altogether pleasant face, paused on his way down the gymnasium steps and put the question sneeringly. Below, on the gravelled path leading to the athletic field, a little group of fellows had turned and were watching expectantly; Horace Burlen had a way of taking conceit out of new boys that was always interesting. To be sure, in the present case the new boy didn't look especially conceited – unless it is conceit to appear for football practice in a dandy crimson sweater which must have cost well up in two figures – but you never could tell, and, anyway, Horace Burlen was the school leader and had a right to do what he pleased. Just at present it pleased him to scowl fiercely, for the new boy was displaying a most annoying deliberation. Horace examined the other with awakening interest. He was a fairly tall youth, sixteen years of age, well set up with good chest and shoulders and rather wide hips. Like Horace, the younger boy was in football togs, only his sweater instead of being brown was crimson and in place of the letters "F H" sported by Horace the front of his garment showed where the inscription "H 2nd" had been ripped away. But the difference between the two boys didn't end there; Horace Burlen was tall and big and dark; Roy Porter was several inches shorter, not so wide of shoulder nor so deep of chest; and whereas Horace's hair was straight and black, Roy's was light, almost sandy, and was inclined to be curly. Under the hair was a good-looking sun-browned face, with a short, well-built nose, a good mouth and a pair of nice grey-blue eyes which at this moment were regarding Horace calmly. The older boy scowled threateningly.

"Say, kid, at this school we teach 'em to answer when they're spoken to; see? Where'd you get that silly red sweater?"

"It was given to me," answered Roy coolly.

"Think you'll ever grow enough to fill it?"

"I guess so."

"Who gave it to you?"

"Seems to me they're a bit inquisitive at this school. But if you must know, my brother gave it to me."

"Too big for him, wasn't it?"

Roy smiled.

"Not to speak of. He got a better one."

"Hope he changed the color," said Horace with a sneer.

"Why, yes, he did, as it happened. His new one is black with a crimson H."

Horace started and shot a quick glance up and down the form confronting him.

"Is your brother Porter of the Harvard eleven?" he asked with a trace of unwilling respect in his voice. Roy nodded.

"I suppose you think you can play the game because he can, eh? What's your name?"

"Porter," answered Roy sweetly.

"Don't get fresh," admonished the other angrily. "What's your first name?"

"I guess it will do if you just call me Porter," was the reply. There was a sudden darkening of the blue eyes and in spite of the fact that the lips still smiled serenely Horace saw the danger signal and respected it.

"You're a pretty fresh young kid at present, but you'll get some of it taken out of you before you're here long," said the school leader turning away. "And I'd advise you to take off that red rag; it's too much like the Hammond color to be popular here."

"Fresh, am I?" mused Roy, watching the other join the group below and cross the lawn toward the field. "I wonder what he thinks he is? If he ever asks me I'll mighty soon tell him! Red rag! I'll make him take that back some day, see if I don't."

Roy's angry musings were interrupted by the sudden outward swing of the big oak door behind him. A dozen or so of Ferry Hill boys in football attire trooped out in company with Mr. Cobb, an instructor who had charge of the football and baseball coaching. Roy fell in behind the group, crossed the lawn, passed through the gate in the well-trimmed hedge and found himself on the edge of the cinder track. The gridiron had just been freshly marked out for this first practice of the year and the white lines gleamed brightly in the afternoon sunlight. Half a dozen footballs were produced from a canvas bag and were speedily bobbing crazily across the turf or arching up against the blue sky. Roy, however, remained on the side-line and looked about him.

Beyond the field was a border of trees and an occasional telegraph pole marking the road over which he had journeyed the evening before from the Silver Cove station, where he had left the train from New York – and home. That word home sounded unusually pleasant to-day. Not that he was exactly homesick, in spite of the fact that this was his first experience of boarding school life; he would have been rather indignant, I fancy, at the suggestion; but he had made the mistake of reaching Ferry Hill School a day too early, had spent the night in a deserted dormitory and had killed time since then in arranging his possessions in the scanty cupboard assigned to him and in watching the arrival of his future companions. It had been a dull time and he may, I think, be pardoned if his thoughts turned for an instant a bit wistfully toward home. Brother Laurence had given him a good deal of advice – probably very excellent advice – before taking himself away to Cambridge, fall practice and glory, and part of it was this:

"Keep a stiff upper lip, Roy, mind your own affairs and when you're down on your luck or up against a bigger man grin just as hard as you can grin."

That was the Harvard way, although Roy didn't know it then. But now he recalled the advice – and grinned. Then he began again the examination of his surroundings. Very beautiful surroundings they were, too. To his left, beyond the turn of the track, were the tennis courts all freshly limed. Beyond those the trees began and sloped gently upward and away in a forest of swaying branches. Turning, he saw, below the courts, and divided from them by a stone wall, a good-sized orchard across which the apple and pear trees marched as straightly and evenly as a regiment of soldiers. Below the orchard lay the vegetable garden, filled with the blue-green of late cabbages and the yellower hues of waving corn. Then, facing still further about, until the field was at his back, he could look over the level top of the wide hedge and so down the slope of the campus. To his right were the two white barns and clustering outhouses with the tower of School Hall rising beyond them. Further to the left was the red brick, vine-draped "Cottage," residence of the Principal, Doctor Emery, and his family. Then, further away down the sloping turf, stood Burgess Hall, the dormitory and dining room, while here, close by, was the handsome new gymnasium. Beyond the campus the "Grove," a small plantation of beech and oaks, shaded the path which led to the river and the boat house at its margin. A long expanse of the Hudson was in sight from where he stood, its broad, rippled surface aglint in the September sunshine. At the far side of the stream, a group of red buildings huddled under giant elms, stood Hammond Academy, Ferry Hill's life-long rival. In the far distance loomed the blue summits of the nearer mountains. Yes, it was all very beautiful and picturesque, and Roy

admitted the fact ungrudgingly; he was very anxious to discover merits and lovable qualities in the place which was to be his home for the better part of the next two years.

"This way, everybody!" called Mr. Cobb, and Roy turned and joined the group of candidates. There were forty-three students at Ferry Hill that year, and at first glance it seemed that every last one of them had decided to try for the football team. But a second look would have found a handful of juniors whose size or age made them ineligible watching proceedings from the side-line. And there were one or two older boys, too, among the spectators, and Roy wondered whether they were crippled or ill! Surely no healthy boy could be content to watch from the side-line!

"Fellows who played in the varsity or second last year," directed Mr. Cobb, "take the other end of the field and practice passing for a while. I'll be down presently. Captain Rogers won't be out until half-past four. The rest of you chaps get a couple of balls and come over this way. That's it. Make a circle and pass the balls around. Stand nearer together than that, you fellows over there. That's better."

Roy found himself between a short, stout youth of apparently fourteen and an older boy whose age might have been anywhere from sixteen to eighteen. He reminded Roy of a weed which had spent all its time growing upward and had forgotten to fill out at the sides. He wore a faded brown sweater with crossed oars dividing the letters F H. Roy experienced a touch of respect for him as a member of the crew quite out of keeping with the feeling of amusement aroused by his lanky body, unkempt hair and unpleasant beady brown eyes. Roy liked the little chunky youth on his other side better. He was evidently a new hand and was in a continual funk for fear he would drop the ball when Roy passed it to him. For this reason Roy took some pains to put it to him easily and where he could best catch it, a piece of thoughtfulness that more than once brought a shy glance of gratitude from the youngster's big, round eyes. But if Roy gave courtesies he received none. The lanky youth seemed to be trying to slam the ball at Roy as hard as he knew how and once Roy caught a gleam of malicious amusement from the squinting eyes.

"Just you wait a minute, my friend," he muttered.

Despite the tall boy's best endeavors he was unable to make Roy fumble. No matter where he shot the ball nor how hard he sent it, Roy's hands gripped themselves about it. After one especially difficult handling of the pigskin Roy looked up to find Mr. Cobb watching him with evident approval. The big fellow who had taken exception to the crimson sweater was not in the squad and Roy concluded that he was one of the last year team. Presently the order came to reverse and the balls began going the other way. Here was Roy's chance for revenge and he didn't let it slip. The first two balls he passed to his tall neighbor quite nicely, but when the third one reached him he caught it in front of him and without turning his body sped it on swift and straight for the tall one's chest. The tall one wasn't expecting it quite so soon and Roy looked properly regretful when the ball went bobbing away into the center of the circle and the shaggy-haired youth went sprawling after it, only to miss it at the first try and have to crawl along on elbows and knees until he had it snuggled under his body. The tall one rewarded Roy with a scowl when he got back to his place, but Roy met the scowl with a look of cherubic innocence, and only Mr. Cobb, watching from outside the circle, smiled as he turned away. After that Roy kept the tall one guessing, but there were no more fumbles. Presently Mr. Cobb called a halt.

"That'll do, fellows. I want to get your names now, so keep your places a moment."

Out came a note book and pencil and one by one the candidates' names were entered. Roy looked on while he awaited his turn and thought that he was going to like Mr. Cobb. The instructor was rather small, a trifle bald-headed and apparently a bunch of muscles. His scarcity of hair could hardly have been due to advanced age for he didn't look a bit over thirty. In his time he had been a good quarter-back on his college eleven and one of the best shortstops of his day.

The small youth at Roy's right, after darting several diffident looks in his direction, at length summoned courage to address him.

"You're a new boy, aren't you?" he asked.

"Brand new," answered Roy smilingly. "How about you?"

"Oh, I've been here two years." The knowledge lent a degree of assurance and he went on with less embarrassment. "I was a junior last year and couldn't play. You know, they won't let the juniors play football here. Mighty mean, I think, don't you?"

"Well, I don't know," answered Roy. "I played when I was twelve, but I guess it's pretty risky for a kid of that age to do it. How old are you?"

"Fourteen. Do you think I'll stand any show to get on the team?"

"Why not? You look pretty solid. Can you run?"

"Not very fast. Ferris said I wouldn't have any show at all and so I thought I'd ask you; you seemed to know about football."

"Did I? How could you tell?" asked Roy surprisedly.

"Oh, by the way you – went at it," answered the other vaguely.

"Oh, I see. Who's Ferris?"

"S-sh!" The small youth lowered his voice. "That's he next to you; Otto Ferris. He's trying for half-back. He almost made it last year."

"Is he on the crew?" asked Roy.

"Yes, Number Three. He's a particular chum of Burlen's."

"You don't say? And who's Burlen?"

The other's features expressed surprise and something very much like pain.

"Don't you know who Burlen is?" he asked incredulously. "Why, he's –"

But Roy's curiosity had to go unsatisfied for the moment, for Mr. Cobb appeared with his book.

"Well, Sidney, you're out for the team at last, eh?"

"Yes, sir; do you think I can make it, sir?"

"Who knows? You'll have to get rid of some of that fat, though, my boy." Mr. Cobb turned to Roy.

"Let's see, I met you last evening, didn't I?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so; and the name was – er – Brown wasn't it?"

"Porter, sir."

"Oh, Porter; I remember now. How old are you?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"Played before, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whereabouts?"

"In New York, on my grammar school eleven."

"What position?"

"Quarter, first; then left half."

"Which was the best?"

"Quarter, I think, sir."

"What class are you in?"

"Second senior."

"Thank you; that's all."

The coach passed on and Sidney claimed Roy's attention again.

"Do you think I'm very fat?" he asked anxiously.

"I should say you had about ten or twelve pounds that might as well come off," answered Roy.

"Does drinking vinegar help?"

"I never tried it," laughed Roy. "But exercise is a heap surer."

"All right, fellows," called the coach. "Ferris, you take charge of the squad until I come back. Let them fall on the ball a while. I want Gallup and Rogers to come with me."

A sturdily-built youth stepped out of the group and Mr. Cobb looked around a trifle impatiently. "Rogers!"

There was no answer. Roy thought the coach was looking at him, but couldn't think why he should. Then he heard Sidney's voice at his elbow.

"He means you! He never remembers names. You'd better go."

Doubtfully Roy stepped forward.

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed Mr. Cobb. "What's the trouble with your ears? Not deaf, are you?"

"No, sir," answered Roy meekly.

"That's good. You must keep your ears open here and step lively when you're called. I'm going to give you two a try on the first squad. Come on."

And Mr. Cobb strode briskly off down the field.

CHAPTER II

ROY MAKES AN ENEMY AND A FRIEND

A few minutes later Roy found himself acting as quarter-back on one of the two squads made up of last season's first and second. The boy in front of him, playing center, was a big youth who had a half hour before insulted his precious sweater and who Roy now discovered to be Horace Burlen. Burlen hadn't shown himself especially delighted at Roy's advent, but so far had refrained from addressing him. For a time the work went well enough. Each squad, since there were not enough players present to make up two full elevens, held nine men, five in the line and four behind it, and the work consisted of snapping the ball back by center and handing it to one of the backs by quarter. No signals were used and the passing was slow, the idea being merely to accustom the players to handling the ball. Roy was instructed in the holding of the pigskin and in passing and the backs in receiving the ball and placing it against the body. Roy showed an aptitude for the work which more than vindicated Mr. Cobb's judgment and for ten minutes or so, during which time Roy's squad traversed the length of the field, there were few fumbles and few mistakes. But presently, when Mr. Cobb had taken himself off to the other squad, the cry of "Ball!" went up and Roy was on his stomach snuggling the oval in his arms. The backs took their places again and the ball went back to center. This time there was no hitch, and full-back, followed by left and right halves, trotted through the line between guard and tackle. But on the next play the erratic pigskin again eluded Roy's hands, and after that fumbles and the cry of "Ball! Ball!" became so frequent that Mr. Cobb's attention was attracted and he came over.

"What's the trouble here? Who's doing all that fumbling?" he demanded.

"My fault, sir," answered Roy.

"What's the matter?"

"I can't seem to get my hands on to it, sir. I don't think – I don't think it is coming back very well."

Horace Burlen turned wrathfully.

"You're no good, that's what's the trouble with you!" he exclaimed. "I'm sending that ball back same as I always do."

"Well, try it again," said the coach.

Strange to tell there were no more fumbles as long as Mr. Cobb was by, but almost as soon as his back was turned the trouble began again. Fumbles, perhaps, were not so frequent, but almost always there was delay in getting the ball from center to back. Finally Horace Burlen stood up and faced Roy disgustedly.

"Say, kid, can't you learn to handle that ball?" he asked. "Haven't you ever seen a football before?"

Roy strove to keep his temper, which was already at boiling point.

"I'll do my part if you'll do yours," he said. "You're trying to see how poorly you can pass."

"Oh, get out! I played football when you were in the nursery! Maybe if you'd take that red rag off you'd be able to use your arms."

Somebody behind him chuckled and Roy had to shut his lips resolutely to keep back the angry words. Finally,

"Ball to left half, through left tackle," he called. Horace grunted and stooped again over the pigskin. Again the ball came back, this time trickling slowly along on the turf. The next time it came back high and to the left and was fumbled. Roy said nothing as he recovered it and pushed it back to center, but it was plain that the fellows, whispering amongst themselves, were losing interest in the work. Roy, without turning his head, became aware of the presence of a newcomer behind him. He supposed it was Mr. Cobb and hoped the coach would notice the manner in which Burlen was

snapping back. This time the ball was deliberately sent back to Roy as hard as Horace could send it with the result that it bounded from his hands before he could close his fingers about it and went wiggling off across the turf. Roy, arising to go after it, almost ran into a tall, good-looking youth of apparently eighteen, a youth with clean-cut features and snapping grey eyes.

"That will do, Horace," said the newcomer dryly. "You can rest awhile. You're pretty bad."

The center, facing around with a start of mingled surprise and dismay, met the unsmiling eyes of the captain with an attempt at bravado.

"Hello, Jack," he said. "It's about time you came. They've given us the worst apology for a quarter you ever saw. Why, he can't hold the ball!"

"Yes, I noticed it," replied Jack Rogers. "And I noticed that you seemed to have an idea that this practice is just for fun. You'd better take a couple of turns around the track and go in. O Ed! Ed Whitcomb! Come over here and play center. Fernald, you take Ed's place on the other squad."

The changes were made in a trice. After a muttered protest that the captain paid no heed to and a threatening look at Roy, Horace Burlen took himself off. The captain went into the left of the line and practice was taken up again. After that there was no more trouble. Presently Mr. Cobb called a halt and the candidates were put at punting and catching, which, followed by a trot twice around the quarter-mile cinder track, completed the afternoon's work.

Roy had worked rather hard and, as a result, he found himself pretty well out of breath when the second lap was half over. He had gradually dropped back to last place in the straggling procession and when the end of the run was in sight he was practically alone on the track, almost all of the others having turned in through the gate and made for the gym. Roy had just finished the turn at an easy jog when he heard cries of distress from the direction of the stables behind him.

"Spot, drop it! Oh, you bad, wicked cat! John! John! Where are you, John? Spot! *Spot! O-o-oh!*" The exclamations ended in a wild, long-drawn wail of feminine anguish.

"A girl," thought Roy. "Wonder what's up. Guess I'd better go see."

Turning, he struck off from the track at a run, crossed a triangle of turf and found himself confronted by the wide hedge. But he could see over it, and what he saw was an odd little enclosure formed by one end of the barn and two walls of packing cases and boxes piled one upon another. In the center of the enclosure stood a girl with the bluest of blue eyes, the reddest of red hair and the most despairing of freckled faces. At first glance she seemed to be surrounded by dogs and cats and pigeons; afterwards Roy found that the animals were not so numerous as had first appeared. The girl saw Roy quite as soon as he saw her.

"Oh, quick, *quick!*" she commanded, pointing toward the roof of a low shed nearby. "Spot has got one of the babies and he's killing it! Can't you hurry, boy?"

Roy looked doubtfully at the broad hedge. Then he retreated a few steps, took a running jump, landing three-quarters way across the top and wriggled himself to the ground on the other side in a confusion of circling pigeons.

"Where?" he gasped when he had gathered himself up.

"There!" shrieked the girl, still pointing tragically. "Can't you climb up and get it away from him? Can't you do anything, you – you stupid silly?"

At last Roy saw the reason for her fright. On the edge of the shed roof, lashing his tail in ludicrous ferocity, crouched a half-grown cat, and under his claws lay a tiny young white rabbit. Roy looked hurriedly about for a stick, but nothing of the description lay at hand. Meanwhile the red-haired girl taunted him to action, interspersing wails of despair with pleas for help and sprinkling the whole with uncomplimentary reflections on his courage and celerity.

"Aren't you going to do *anything?*" she wailed. "Are you going to stand there all night? Oh, please, *please* rescue him!"

The reflection on Roy's celerity weren't at all merited, for scarcely a quarter of a minute had passed since his advent. But if "the baby" was to be rescued there was no time to lose. The cat,

apparently not understanding what all the noise and excitement was about, still held his captive and looked down wonderingly from the edge of the roof. Roy hesitated for just an instant longer. Then he seized the first apparently empty box that came to hand, turned it upside-down at the corner of the shed, and, amidst more despairing shrieks than ever, leaped onto it. Perhaps he was scared by the sudden appearance of Roy's head over the edge of the roof, perhaps by the renewed and more appalling clamor; at all events the cat abandoned his prey on the instant and took off along the roof. Roy managed to save the rabbit from a bad fall by catching it in one hand just as it rolled over the edge and in another moment was holding it forth, a very badly frightened little mass of white fur and pink eyes, to its distressed mistress. But strange to say the mistress seemed more anguished than ever. What she was saying Roy couldn't for the life of him make out, but it was evidently something uncomplimentary to him. In another moment the mystery was explained. Following the excited gestures of the red-haired girl, Roy turned just in time to see the box upon which he had stood topple and fall. Whereupon from out of it stalked a highly insulted red and green parrot, quite the largest Roy had ever seen. The bird emerged with ruffled plumage and wrathful eyes, cocked his head on one side and remarked fretfully in a shrill voice:

"Well, I never did! Naughty Poll! Naughty Poll!"

Then he chuckled wickedly and rearranged his feathers with a formidable beak. After that he turned and viewed Roy with a glittering, beady eye, and,

"Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing!" he shrieked at the top of his voice.

This outburst was so unexpected and excruciating that Roy gave back before it. But as though satisfied with the dismay he had caused the parrot broke out into a shrill burst of laughter and waddled toward the girl, who had now transferred her attention to the rescued rabbit.

"I – I didn't know he was in the box," stammered Roy.

"No, I don't suppose you did," answered the girl grudgingly. "Boys are so stupid! You might have killed him! Come here, Methuselah, and tell me all about it. Did the wicked boy frighten you most to death? Did he? Well, he was a wicked thing, so he was."

The parrot closed his beak carefully about one of her fingers and was lifted to her arm, where he sat in ruffled dignity and stared at Roy with malevolent gaze. The rescued rabbit lay meanwhile, a palpitating bunch of white, in the girl's other hand. Presently, having examined him carefully for damages and found none, she stepped to one of the boxes and deposited him on a litter of straw and cabbage leaves.

"I've had such horrid luck with the babies," she said confidently, her indignation apparently forgotten. "There were three at first. Then one died of rheumatism – at least, I'm almost sure it was rheumatism, – and one was killed by a rat and now only poor little Angel is left. I call him Angel," she explained, turning to her audience, "because he is so white. Don't you think it is a very appropriate name?"

Roy nodded silently. Like the parrot, he had had his temper a bit ruffled; the girl's remarks had not been especially complimentary. If she guessed his feelings she showed no signs of it. Instead,

"You're a new boy, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes," answered Roy.

"What's your name?"

"Roy Porter."

"Mine's Harry – I mean Harriet Emery; they call me Harry. Harriet's a beast of a name, isn't it?"

Roy hesitated, somewhat taken back.

"Oh, you needn't mind being polite," continued the girl. "I hate polite people – I mean the kind that say things they don't mean just to be nice to you. Harriet is a beast of a name; I don't care if I was named for Aunt Harriet Beverly. I hate it, don't you? Oh, I forgot! You're one of the polite sort!"

"No, I'm not," answered Roy, laughing. "I don't like Harriet any better than you do. But I like Harry."

"Do you?" she asked eagerly. "Honest? Hope to die?"

"Hope to die," echoed Roy gravely.

"Then you may call me Harry."

"Thanks. Is Doctor Emery your father?"

"Yes. Only they don't call him Doctor Emery – the boys, I mean."

"Don't they? What do they call him?"

"Emmy," answered Harry with a giggle. "It's such a funny name for papa! And mamma they call 'Mrs. Em.'"

"And they call you Harry?" said Roy for want of something better to say. Harry's head went up on the instant and her blue eyes flashed.

"You'd better believe they don't! That is, not many of them. They call me *Miss* Harry."

"Oh, excuse me," Roy apologized. "*Miss* Harry."

Harry hesitated. Then,

"Those that I like call me Harry," she said. "And you – you rescued the baby. So – you may call me Harry, without the Miss, you know."

"I'll try to deserve the honor," replied Roy very gravely.

Harry observed him suspiciously.

"There you go being polite and nasty," she said crossly. Then, with a sudden change of manner, she advanced toward him with one very brown and somewhat dirty little hand stretched forth and a ludicrous smirk on her face. "I forgot you were a new boy," she said. "I hope your stay with us will be both pleasant and profitable."

Roy accepted the proffered hand bewilderedly.

"There," she said, with a little shake of her shoulders and a quick abandonment of the funny stilted tone and manner, "there, that's done. Mamma makes me do that, you know. It's awfully silly, isn't it?"

Methuselah, who, during the conversation, had remained perched silently on the girl's shoulder, now decided to take part in the proceedings.

"Well, I never did!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Can't you be quiet? Naughty Poll! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing!"

This resulted in his banishment, Roy, at Harry's request, returning the borrowed box to its place, and the parrot being placed therein with strict injunctions to remain there.

"Doesn't he ever get away?" asked Roy.

"Oh, yes, sometimes. Once he got into the stable and went to sleep on the head of John's bed. John's the gardener, you know. And when he came in and saw Methuselah sitting there he thought it was an evil spirit and didn't stop running until he reached the cottage. My, he was scared!" And Harry giggled mischievously at the recollection.

Then Roy was formally introduced to the numerous residents of the enclosure. Snip, a fox terrier, had already made friends. Lady Grey, a maltese Angora cat, who lay curled up contentedly in one of the lower tier of boxes, received Roy's caresses with well-bred condescension. Joe, one of her kittens, and a brother of the disgraced Spot, showed more interest and clawed Roy's hand in quite a friendly way. In other boxes were a squirrel called "Teety," two white guinea pigs, a family of rabbits, six white mice and a bantam hen who resented Roy's advent with a very sharp beak. And all about fluttered grey pigeons and white pigeons, fan-tails and pouters and many more the names of which Roy quickly forgot. And while the exhibition was going on Roy observed the exhibitor with not a little interest.

Harriet – begging her pardon! Harry – Emery was fourteen years old, fairly tall for her age, not overburdened with flesh and somewhat of a tomboy. Considering the fact that she had been born and

had lived all her short life at a boys' school the latter fact is not unnatural. I might almost say that she had been a trifle spoiled. That, however, would be rather unkind, for it was just that little spice of spoiling that had made Harry so natural and unaffected. The boys called Harry "a good fellow," and to Harry no praise could have been sweeter. As might have been expected, she had grown up with a fondness for boys' sports and interests, and could skate as well if not better than any pupil Ferry Hill had ever known, could play tennis well, could handle a pair of oars knowingly and wasn't *very* much afraid of a swiftly-thrown baseball. Her muscles were hard and illness was something she had long since forgotten about. But in spite of her addiction for boys' ways there was still a good deal of the girl about her, and she was capable of a dozen different emotions in as many minutes.

Roy decided that she was rather pretty. Her hair was luridly red, but many persons would have called it beautiful. Her eyes were very blue and had a way of looking at you that was almost disconcerting in its frank directness. Her face was brown with sunburn, but there was color in the cheeks. A short, somewhat pugnacious little nose, not guiltless of freckles, went well with the red-lipped, mischievous mouth beneath. For the rest, Harry was a wholesome, lovable little minx with the kindest heart that ever beat under a mussy white shirt-waist and the quickest temper that ever went with red hair.

Roy's examination of his new acquaintance was suddenly interrupted by the subject, who swung around upon him with an expression of great severity.

"Do you know," she asked, "that the boys aren't allowed in here without permission and that if papa finds it out you'll be punished?"

Roy shook his head in bewilderment.

"And," continued Harry impressively, "that John is coming along the lane, and that if he sees you here he'll have to report you, and –"

"What shall I do?" asked Roy, looking about for an avenue of escape.

"Why," said Harry, laughing enjoyably at his discomfiture, "just stay where you are. I'm the one who gives permission!"

CHAPTER III

A MIDNIGHT HAZING

After the lights were out that night Roy lay for quite a while in his bed in the Senior Dormitory reviewing the day. He was tired as a result of the football practice and he had a lame tendon in his left leg which he believed he had sustained in his flying leap onto the hedge when going to the relief of Angel, and which bothered him a little now that he had stopped using it. But his weariness and soreness hadn't kept him from eating an enormous dinner in the Dining Hall down stairs, any more than it was going to keep him from going to sleep in a few minutes.

During dinner he had begun to feel at home. He had found himself at Mr. Cobb's table, which later on would be weeded out to make room for the football players, and had sat next to Captain Rogers, who had spoken to him several times quite affably, but not about football. The other fellows, too, had shown a disposition to accept him as one of them, if we omit Horace Burlen and Otto Ferris, and by the time Roy had scraped the last morsel of pudding from his dish he had commenced to think that life at Ferry Hill might turn out to be "both pleasant and profitable," as Harry had phrased it. After dinner he had spent the better part of an hour in the study room on the first floor composing a letter home. That finished, he had wandered down to the river and had been mildly rebuked by Mr. Buckman, an instructor, for going out of bounds after eight o'clock. There had been prayers at nine in the two dormitories and after that, in the midst of shouts and laughter and general "rough house," he had undressed, washed, donned his pajamas and jumped into the narrow white enamelled bed to which he had been assigned.

Tomorrow lessons would begin and he wondered how he was going to fare. He had entered on a certificate from his grammar school and had been put into the Second Senior Class. If he could keep up with that he would be ready for college in two years. Roy's father pretended to think him backward because he would not enter until he was eighteen, and delighted in telling him of boys who had gone to college at sixteen. But Roy's mother always came to his defence. There was no sense, she declared warmly, in boys going to college before they were old enough to understand what it meant and to derive benefit from the life. And Roy's father would shake his head dubiously and mutter that he had never expected a son of his to be a dullard.

Greek and English were what Roy was afraid of. Latin and mathematics held no terrors for him. As for the other studies, he believed he could worry along with them all right. His mother had hinted hopefully of a scholarship, but Roy knew his capabilities better than she did and looked for no such honors.

Meanwhile the dormitory, full of whispers and repressed laughter for the first few minutes of darkness, had become silent save for a snore here and there. Roy's thoughts wandered back to the football field and to Horace Burlen, who was lying somewhere near in the dark, and presently his eyelids fell together and he was asleep.

How long he slept he never knew, but when he awoke suddenly to find hands gently shaking him by the shoulders it seemed that it must be morning. But the dormitory was still in darkness and the breathing of the sleepers still sounded.

"Get up and don't make any noise," commanded a voice at his ear. Sleepily, he strove to get his thoughts together. For a moment nothing was very clear to him. Then the command was repeated a trifle impatiently and Roy began to understand.

"What for?" he asked, temporizing.

"Never you mind. Just you do what we tell you, and mind you make no fuss about it. There are a dozen of us here and we won't stand any nonsense."

Roy hadn't given any thought to hazing, but now he concluded that, to use his own inelegant expression, he "was up against it." Of course, if it was the custom to haze new boys there was no use making a fuss about it, no use in playing baby. The only thing that bothered him was that the speaker's voice sounded unpleasantly like Horace Burlen's and there was no telling to what lengths that youth's dislike might lead him. However, his companions, whoever they were, would probably see fair play. So Roy, with a sigh, tumbled softly out of bed. He could just see indistinct forms about him and hear their breathing.

"Hold still," said the voice, and Roy, obeying, felt a bandage being pressed against his eyes and secured behind his head. Then, with a hand grasping each arm, he was led silently across the floor. Down two flights of stairs he was conducted, through the lower hall and then the chill night air struck his face. More steps, this time the granite flight in front of the hall, and his bare feet were treading uncomfortably on the gravel. So far there had been no sounds from his captors. Now, however, they began to whisper amongst themselves and, although he couldn't hear what was being said, he gathered that they were undecided as to where to take him. The procession halted and all save the two who stood guard beside him drew away. The night air began to feel decidedly chill and he realized that cotton pajamas aren't the warmest things to wear for a nocturnal jaunt in late September. Presently the others returned and they started on again. In a moment the path began to descend and Roy remembered with a sinking heart that he had trod that same path earlier in the evening and that at the end of it lay the river!

By this time his teeth were chattering and he was quite out of sympathy with the adventure. For a moment he considered escape. But if, as the leader of the expedition had stated, there were a dozen fellows in the party, he would be recaptured as sure as fate. Unconsciously he held back.

"None of that," said the voice threateningly, and he was pulled forward again. For a few steps he tried digging his heels in the ground, but it hurt and did no good anyhow. So he went on without further resistance. In a minute the procession stopped. Then he heard the keel of a boat grate lightly on the pebbles.

"Step up," was the command. Roy obeyed and felt the planking of the float under his bare feet. Then,

"Get into the boat," said the voice. Roy did so very cautiously and found a seat. Oars were dipped into the water and the boat moved softly away from the landing.

"Can you swim?" asked the voice, and this time Roy was certain that it was Horace Burlen's. For an instant he wondered what would happen if he said no. Probably they would devise some punishment quite as uncomfortable as a ducking in the lake. The latter wasn't very terrifying, and, at all events, the water couldn't be much colder than the air was! So,

"Yes," he answered, and heard a chuckle.

"Good, you'll have a chance to prove it!"

For what seemed several minutes the boat was paddled onward. By this time, thought Roy, they must be a long way from shore, and he suddenly wondered, with a little sinking at his heart, whether the current was very strong thereabouts and how, when he was in the water, he was to tell in which direction the land lay. Then the oars had ceased creaking in the rowlocks and the boat was rocking very gently in the water.

"Stand up," said the voice. Hands guided him as he obeyed and steadied him.

"When I count three you will jump into the water and swim for land," continued the leader.

"You've got to take this thing off my eyes, though," protested Roy.

"That may not be," answered the voice sternly, and Roy caught a giggle from behind him which was quickly suppressed.

"Then I'm hanged if I'll do it," he said doggedly.

"Better to jump than be thrown," was the ominous reply.

Roy considered.

"Which way do I swim?" he asked. "Where's the landing?"

"That you will discover for yourself. We may tell you no more."

"Don't see that you've told me much of anything," muttered Roy wrathfully. "How do you fellows know that there isn't a big old rock here? Want me to bust my head open?"

"We are in clear water," was the answer. "And" – and now the formal phraseology was abandoned – "if you don't hurry up and get ready we'll plaguey soon heave you in head over heels."

"Oh, go to thunder, you old bully!" growled Roy. "Go ahead and do your counting. I'd rather be in the river than here with you."

"Take him out farther," said the voice angrily. But the order wasn't obeyed. Instead there was a whispered discussion and finally the voice said:

"All right. Now then, all ready, kid! One!.. Two!.. Three!"

The grasp on Roy's arms was relaxed, he raised them above his head and sprang outward. But just as he was clearing the boat a hand shot forward and grasped his ankle just long enough to spoil his dive. Then he had struck the water flat on his stomach and, with the breath gone from his body, felt it close over his head.

CHAPTER IV

ROY CHANGES HIS MIND

For an instant his arms thrashed wildly. Then he was standing, gasping and sputtering, with the bandage torn away and the ripples breaking against his thighs! From the bank, only a few feet away, came roars of laughter, diminishing as his captors, having drawn the boat up onto the little pebbly beach, stumbled up the path toward the school. And Roy, shivering and chattering, stood there in a scant three feet of icy water and impotently shook his fist in the darkness!

At first, as he scrambled with his bare feet over the sharp pebbles to the shore, he could not understand what had happened. Then he realized that all the rowing had been in circles, or possibly back and forth along the shore. For some reason this made him madder than if they had really made him dive into deep water beyond his depth. They had made a perfect fool of him! And all the way back up the hill and across the campus he vowed vengeance – when his chattering teeth would let him!

A few minutes later, divested of his wet pajamas, he was under the covers again, striving to get some warmth back into his chilled body. When he had tiptoed noiselessly into the dormitory whispers had greeted him and unseen persons had asked softly whether he had found the water warm, how the walking was and how he liked diving. But Roy had made no answer and soon the voices had been stilled. Sleep was long in coming to him and when it did it brought such unpleasant dreams that he found little rest.

At breakfast, when the announcements were read by Mr. Buckman, Roy found himself one of four boys summoned to call on Dr. Emery at the office in School Hall after the meal was over. Looking up he encountered the eyes of Horace Burlen fixed upon him threateningly. Roy smiled to himself. So they were afraid that he would tell on them, were they? Well, they'd see!

When Roy's turn to enter the office came, after a few minutes of waiting in the outer room in company with the school secretary, he found himself a little bit nervous. Perhaps the Principal had already learned of last night's mischief and held him to blame in the matter.

But when, five minutes or so later, Roy came out again he looked quite contented. In the outer office he encountered Mr. Buckman, who nodded to him, paused as though about to speak, apparently thought better of it and passed on into the Principal's room. Roy hurried over to the Senior Dormitory, armed himself with books, pad and pencils and managed to reach his first class just as the doors were being closed. Lessons went well enough that first day, and when, at four o'clock, Roy trotted onto the gridiron for afternoon practice he hadn't a worry in the world. Perhaps that is one reason why he did such good work at quarter on the second squad that Jack Rogers patted him once on the shoulder and told him to "keep it up, Porter," while Mr. Cobb paid him the compliment of almost remembering his name!

"Good work, Proctor!" said the coach.

There were several absentees that afternoon, notably Horace Burlen and Otto Ferris, and there was much discussion amongst the fellows as to the reason. Before practice was over the report had got around that the absent ones had been "placed on inner bounds." Roy didn't know just what that meant, but it sounded pretty bad, and he was almost sorry for the culprits. When, after practice was over, Roy did his two laps with the others, he looked across the hedge as he passed the stables. The doves were circling about in the late sunshine and the wicked Spot was sunning himself on the edge of the shed roof, but the girl with the red hair was not in sight.

At supper Roy found a decided change in the attitude of the fellows toward him. Instead of the friendly, half curious glances of the night before, the looks he received were cold and contemptuous. For the most part, however, the fellows avoided noticing him and all during the meal only Jack Rogers and Mr. Cobb addressed him, the former to inquire where he had played football before coming to

Ferry Hill and the latter to offer him a second helping of cold meat. Later Roy accidentally overheard a conversation not intended for his ears. He was in the study room, whither he had taken his books. The window beside him was open and under it, on the granite steps outside, was a group of the younger boys.

"Emmy called them to the office at noon," one boy was saying, "and raised an awful row with them. Said hazing was forbidden, and they knew it, and that he had a good mind to send them all home. He tried to get them to tell who started it, but they wouldn't. So he put them all on inner bounds for a month."

"How'd he know who was in it?" asked another boy.

"Why, the new chap squealed, of course!" was the contemptuous answer. "Horace Burlen says so. Says he doesn't know how he guessed the other fellows, but supposes he recognized him by his voice. A mighty dirty trick, I call it."

"That's the way with those public school fellows," said a third speaker. "They haven't any principles."

"It's going to just about bust up the eleven," said the first boy. "Why, there's Burlen and Ferris and Gus Pryor and Billy Warren all football men!"

"Mighty little difference Otto Ferris's absence will make, though."

"Oh, he'd have made the team this year, all right."

"Well, a month isn't very long. They'll get back in time to play the big games."

"S'posing they do, silly! How about practice? If Hammond beats us this year it will be that Porter fellow's fault."

"I don't believe he told on them," said a low voice that Roy recognized as Sidney Welch's. "He – he doesn't look like that sort!"

"Doesn't, eh? Then who did tell? Think they peached on themselves?" was the scathing reply. "You'd better not let Horace hear you talking like that, Sid!"

Roy stole away to a distant table with burning cheeks and clenched hands.

When bedtime came things were even worse. All the time he was undressing he was aware that he was the subject of much of the whispered discussion around him and the hostile glances that met him made silence almost impossible. But silent he was, doing his best to seem unaware of what the others were thinking and saying. He passed down the dormitory to the wash-room with head held high and as unconcerned a look as he could manage, but he was heartily thankful when Mr. Cobb put his head out of the door of his room at the end of the dormitory, announced "Bed, fellows," and switched off the electric lights. Roy wasn't very happy while he lay awake there in the darkness waiting for sleep to come to him. He had made a sorry beginning of school life, he reflected bitterly. To be sure, he might deny that he had told on Burlen and his companions, but what good would it do when every fellow believed as they did? No, the only way was to brave it out and in time win back the fellows' respect. But how he hated Horace Burlen! Some day, how or when he did not know, he would get even with Burlen! Meanwhile sleep came to him after a while and he fell into troubled dreams.

The next day his cup of bitterness was filled yet fuller. Harry cut him! He met her on the way across the campus at noon. She was immaculately tidy in a blue skirt and a fresh white shirt-waist and her red hair fell in a neat braid at her back. She carried a bundle of books under her arm and Snip, the fox terrier, ran beside her. Roy nodded with a friendly smile, but his only reward was an unseeing glance from the blue eyes. The color flamed into Roy's face and he hurried on with bent head. I think Harry regretted her action the next instant, for when he had passed she turned and looked after him with a little wistful frown on her face.

On the football field life wasn't much pleasanter than in hall. Roy had already worked himself into the position of first substitute quarter-back, and Bacon, the last year's quarter, was looking anxious and buckling down to work in a way that showed he was not over-confident of holding his place. But when the men before and behind you had rather make you look ridiculous than play the

game you are in a hard way. And that was Roy's fix. Whitcomb, who was playing center in Burlen's absence, was inclined to treat Roy rather decently, but there were others in the squad who never let slip an opportunity to worry him. The way his signals were misunderstood was extraordinary. Not that it mattered so much these days, since practice was in its most primitive stage, but after three afternoons of such treatment Roy was ready to give up the fight. After practice on Saturday he waited for Jack Rogers outside the gymnasium and ranged himself alongside the older boy as he turned toward the dormitory. Jack shot a quick glance at him and nodded.

"I thought I'd better tell you," began Roy, "that I've decided to give up football."

"Think so?" asked the captain dryly.

"Yes," replied Roy, looking a little bit surprised. There was nothing further from the other and Roy strode on at his side, trying to match his long stride and somewhat embarrassedly striving to think of what to say next.

"You see," he said finally, "there's no use in my trying to play quarter while the fellows are down on me. It's just a waste of time. I – I don't seem to be able to get things right."

What he meant was that the others were doing their best to get things wrong, but he didn't want to seem to be complaining of them to Rogers. The latter turned and observed Roy thoughtfully.

"That your only reason?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, let's stop here a minute if you've got time." The two seated themselves on a wooden bench under the trees a few yards from the entrance to the dormitory. "You're new here," continued Jack, "and there are some things you don't know. One of the things is this: we've got to win from Hammond this Fall if we have to work every minute between now and the day of the game. They beat us last year and they didn't do it very squarely. That is, they played a great big fellow named Richardson at right guard who had no business on their team. We protested him, but it did no good. He was a student of the academy at the time, and although we knew he was there just to play football, we couldn't do anything beyond making the protest. As it turned out we were right, for Richardson left Hammond a week after the game, and this year he's playing on a college team. He was a big fellow, twenty years old, weighed two hundred pounds and simply played all around our men. He used up two of them before the game was over. He played mighty dirty ball, too. Our captain last year was Johnny King – he's playing with Cornell this year – and he was plucky clean through. The whole school was in favor of refusing to play Hammond, and Cobb was with us. But King said he'd play them if they had the whole Yale varsity to pick from. When we went out for the second half with the score eleven to nothing against us he said to me: 'Jack, you'll be captain next year, and I want you to remember to-day's game. Get a team together that will lick Hammond. Work for it all the Fall. Never mind what other teams do to you; keep Hammond in mind every minute. Lose every other game on the schedule if you have to, but beat Hammond, Jack! I'll do all I can to get coaches for you, and I'll come down myself for a day or two if I can possibly manage it. What do you say?' I said 'All right, Johnnie,' and we shook hands on it. Hammond scored again in that half, and after it was over we had to carry Johnnie back to the gym. Well?"

He stopped and looked inquiringly at Roy.

"I guess I'll go ahead and play," answered Roy.

"That's better. You're one of us now, and that means that you've got to work yourself blue in the face if necessary to make up for what Hammond did to us last Fall. I can't promise you that you'll get into the game, although I don't see why you shouldn't, but even if you don't, even if you stay on the second all season you'll be doing just as much toward winning the game as any of us – if you'll do your best and a little more. And it mustn't make any difference to you how the fellows treat you or what they say. You're there to play football and run your team. Of course, what takes place between you and the others is none of my business and I shan't step in to help you, not once; but just as soon as I find that they are risking the success of the eleven you can count on me to back you up. I won't stand

any nonsense from them, and they know it; or if they don't know it now they mighty soon will. They say you gave away the fellows who hazed you the other night. I don't know whether you did or didn't, and I don't want you to tell me. I don't care. You can play football, and that's enough for me. I wouldn't care this year if you had stolen the cupola of School Hall. I have nothing to do with what you are off the football field. If you'll do your honest best there I'll stick to you as long as you live. Will you?"

"Yes," answered Roy.

"Good! Shake hands! Now let's go on."

"About that hazing affair, though," said Roy as they left the seat. "I'd like to tell you – "

"I don't want to be told," answered Jack curtly. "If you told on Burlen and the others maybe you had reason, and if you're a decent sort of a chap they'll get over it in time. If you didn't you've got nothing to worry about. If a chap plays fair and square fellows pretty soon know it. See you at supper. So long."

Jack turned down the path toward the Cottage and Roy ran up the steps of Burgess Hall with a lighter heart than he had had for several days.

CHAPTER V

CHUB EATON INTRODUCES HIMSELF

Roy had stayed to speak to Mr. Buckman after the geometry class had been dismissed, and so, when he reached the entrance of the hall on his way out, he found the broad granite steps well lined with boys. Nearly a week had passed since the hazing episode and the beginning of the present ostracism, and during that period Roy had become, if not used to it, at least in a measure inured. The smaller boys – the Juniors – were the worst, and they, Roy felt certain, were being constantly egged on by Horace Burlen and his chums, of whom Otto Ferris was apparently the closest. Horace himself refrained from active animosity. When he met Roy he pretended to consider the latter beneath notice and did no more than sneer as he turned his head away. But Otto never allowed an opportunity to be mean to escape him. And to-day, an opportunity presenting itself, he seized upon it.

Roy, looking straight ahead, passed down the steps, trying hard to forget that well nigh every eye was fixed upon him. He had reached the last step but one and the ordeal was almost over when Otto saw his chance. The next instant Roy had measured his length on the gravel path below and his books and papers lay scattered about him. He scrambled to his feet with blazing cheeks and eyes and strode toward Otto. The latter, too, got to his feet, but showed no overmastering desire to meet the other. Instead he retreated a step and began to look anxious.

"You tripped me up," charged Roy angrily.

"Who tripped you up?" asked Otto. "You fell over my foot. You ought to look where you're going."

Some of the older boys, their sympathies aroused by Roy's fall, moved between the two. The youngsters gave vocal support to Otto until commanded to "cut it out." Roy attempted to push by one of the boys, but was restrained.

"Run along, Porter," counselled the peacemaker. "It was a shabby trick, but you won't do any good by scrapping."

"Supposing you keep out of it," suggested Roy angrily.

"Now don't you get fresh," answered the other warmly. "You can't scrap here, so run along as I told you. I dare say you only got what was coming to you."

"He deserved it, the sneak!" cried Otto, who, divided from the enemy by strong defences, had recovered his bravery. Roy heard and threw discretion to the winds. He ducked under the arm of the boy in front of him and had almost reached Otto when he was caught and dragged back. Otto, standing his ground because he could not retreat, looked vastly relieved. Roy struggled in the grasp of his captors.

"You let me go!" he cried. "It's none of your affair. Why don't you let him look after himself, you bullies?"

"That'll do for you, freshie," responded one of the older boys named Fernald. "Don't you call names or you'll get in trouble."

"You'd better do as he says," counselled a quiet voice at Roy's side. "There wouldn't be any satisfaction in licking Ferris, anyway; he's just a coward. Come along and pick up your books."

There was something quietly compelling in the voice, and Roy, ceasing to struggle, looked about panting into the round, good-humored face of a boy of about his own age.

"Come on," said the boy softly. And Roy went.

Together they rescued the scattered books and papers, while on the steps discussion broke out stormily; Otto was being "called down" by the older boys and volubly defended by the youngsters.

When the books were once more under his arms Roy thanked his new friend and, without a glance toward the group on the steps, turned toward the dormitory. When he had gone a few steps he became aware of the fact that the round-faced boy was beside him and looked about in surprise.

"I'm going your way," said the other smilingly. "Going to get my sweater on and go out in the canoe awhile. Do you paddle?"

"No, I never tried it," answered Roy, rubbing the blood from his knuckles where they had been scraped on the gravel and shooting a puzzled glance at the other.

"Well, never too late to learn," responded his companion cheerfully. "Come along down and take a lesson. It's a dandy day for a paddle."

"Thanks, but I've got to study a bit."

"Oh, leave that until to-night. No practice, is there?"

"No, most of the fellows went to Maitland with the first eleven."

"Maitland will beat us, probably. We always lose the first two or three games. Why didn't they take you along?"

"Didn't need me, I guess. Bacon is the regular quarter, you know."

"Yes, but I don't see why they need to play him all through the first game. Well, here we are. Get a sweater or something on and meet me down here."

They had paused on the landing outside the Junior Dormitory and Roy hesitated. Then,

"You live here, do you?" he asked.

"Yes, I have a corner bed by the window, and last year, when they wanted to put me upstairs, I kicked. So they let me stay; told me I could be useful keeping an eye on the kids. You'll come, eh?"

"Well, I – I guess so. It's good of you to ask me."

"Not a bit. I hate to go alone; that's all."

He turned smilingly into the dormitory and Roy went on upstairs, got rid of his books and scrambled into his red sweater. It wasn't necessary to pass School Hall on the way down to the river, and Roy was glad of it. He felt that in losing his temper and slanging the older fellows on the steps he had also lost ground. Instead of making friends he had possibly made one or two new enemies. Then the realization that the boy beside him was showing himself more of a friend than any other fellow in school, with the possible exception of Jack Rogers, brought comfort, and, in a sudden flush of gratitude, he turned and blurted:

"It was mighty nice of you to take my part and I'm awfully much obliged."

"Shucks, that wasn't anything! I'm always for the under dog, anyhow – if you don't mind being called a dog."

"No," answered Roy. Then he added a trifle bitterly, "I guess some of them call me worse than that."

"Oh, they'll get over it," was the cheerful reply. "Just you pay no attention to 'em, mind your own affairs and look as though you didn't give a rap."

"That's what Laurence said," replied Roy thoughtfully.

"Sensible chap, Laurence," said the other smilingly. "Who might he be?"

"My brother. He's in Harvard."

"Oh, yes, I remember some one said your brother was 'Larry' Porter, the Harvard football man. I guess that's how you happen to put up such a dandy game yourself, eh?"

"I don't think I've done very well," answered Roy. "But – it hasn't been all my fault."

"Nonsense! You've played like an old stager; every fellow says that."

"Really?" asked Roy eagerly.

"Of course! I've heard lots of the fellows say that Bacon will have to do better than he ever has done to keep his place. And I know what you mean about its not being all your fault. But I guess the chaps on your squad will behave themselves after the dressing down Jack gave them the other day."

"Were you there?"

"No, I don't very often watch practice. I don't care much for football, I'm afraid. Baseball's my game. No, I wasn't there, but Sid Welch was telling me about it. Sid's a very communicative kid."

"He's trying to make the team," said Roy, smiling. "He asked me one day if drinking vinegar would make him thinner."

"He's a funny little chump," laughed the other. "Not a bad sort, either. He has the bed next to mine, and he and I are pretty good chums. By the way, you didn't tell me what it was your brother said."

"Oh, why, he said once that if I wanted to get on I must keep a stiff upper lip and mind my own affairs. And – and he said 'when you're down on your luck or up against a bigger fellow grin as hard as you can grin.'"

"Good for him!" cried the other. "I'd like to meet him. That's what I say, too. No use in looking glum because you're put out at the plate. Just smile and keep your mouth shut, and likely as not you'll make good the next time. Besides, if the other chap sees you looking worried it makes him feel bigger and better. Yes, that's good advice, all right. By the way, I know your name, but I guess you don't know mine; it's Chub Eaton."

"Are you a Senior?"

"Same as you, Second Senior. Of course, I wasn't christened Chub; my real name's Tom; but the fellows began calling me Chub the first year I was here because I was kind of fat then, and I didn't mind. So it stuck. Well, here's the canoe. Just give me a hand, will you? We'll put her over the end of the float."

The boat house was deserted, but out in mid-stream was a pair-oar and a rowboat, the latter well filled. Roy helped in the launching and soon they were afloat.

"It's an awful handsome canoe, isn't it?" asked Roy.

"Pretty fair. I thought the color would fetch you; it's just a match for your sweater. Got the paddle? Well, try your hand at it. Just stick it in and push it back. You'll get the hang after a bit. We'll get out around the island so as to catch the breeze. I hate calm water."

It was a glorious afternoon. September was drawing to a close and there was already a taste of October in the fresh breeze that ruffled the water as soon as they had swung the crimson craft around the lower end of Fox Island. Toward the latter the owner of the craft waved his paddle.

"That's where we have fun April recess," he said. "If you know what's good you'll stay here instead of going home. We camp out there for almost a week and have more fun than you can shake a stick at. Hammond usually comes over and tries to swipe our boats, and two years ago we had a regular battle with them. Take it easier, or you'll get sore muscles. That's better."

Roy obeyed directions and soon discovered that paddling if done the right way is good fun. Before the Autumn was gone he had attained to quite a degree of proficiency and was never happier than when out in the canoe. But to-day his muscles, in spite of training, soon began to ache, and he was glad when the boy at the stern suggested that they let the craft drift for a while. Presently, Roy having turned around very cautiously, they were taking their ease in the bottom of the canoe, the water *lap-lapping* against the smooth crimson sides, the sunlight slanting across the glinting ripples and the cool down-river breeze making the shelter of the boat quite grateful. They talked of all sorts of things, as boys will at first meeting, and as they talked Roy had his first good chance to look his newly-found friend over.

Chub Eaton was sixteen, although he looked fully a year older. He was somewhat thick-set, but not so much so that he was either slow or awkward. He was undeniably good-looking, with a good-humored face, from which a pair of bright, alert brown eyes sparkled. His hair was brown, too, a brown that just escaped being red, but which did not in the least remind Roy of Harry's vivid tresses. Chub looked to be in the fittest physical condition and the coat of tan that covered his face and hands made Roy seem almost pale in comparison. Chub had an easy, self-assured way of doing things that Roy couldn't help admiring, and was a born leader. These same qualities were possessed by Roy

to a lesser extent, and that, as the friendship grew and ripened between the two, they never had a falling-out worthy of the name, proves that each must have had a well-developed sense of fairness and generosity. As I have said, their conversation touched on all sorts of subjects, and finally it got around to Horace Burlen.

"Horace has the whole school under his thumb," explained Chub. "You see, in the first place he is Emmy's nephew, and the fellows have an idea that that makes a difference with Emmy. I don't believe it does, for Emmy's mighty fair; and besides, I've seen him wade into Horace good and hard. But he's school leader, all right. The Juniors do just about whatever he tells 'em to and are scared to death for fear he will eat 'em up. It's awfully funny, the way he bosses things. I don't believe there are half a dozen fellows in school who wouldn't jump into the river if Horace told them to. And the worst of it is, you know, he isn't the best fellow in the world to be leader."

"How about you?" asked Roy. "You're not one of his slaves, are you?"

"Me? Bless you, no! Horace and I had our little scrap two years ago and since then he has given me up for lost. Same way with Jack Rogers. Jack's the only chap that can make Horace stand around. Jack could have taken the lead himself if he'd wanted to, but the only thing he thinks of is football. Horace hates him like poison, but he makes believe he likes him. You see, Horace was up for captain this year and would have got it, too, if Johnny King hadn't made a lot of the team promise last Fall to vote for Jack. It wasn't exactly fair, I guess, but Johnny knew that Horace would never do for football captain. So that's the reason Horace has it in for him."

"Well, he will never get me to lick his boots for him," said Roy decisively.

Chub looked at him smilingly a moment. Then,

"No, I don't believe he will. But you'll have a hard row to hoe for a while, for Horace can make it mighty unpleasant for a chap if he wants to."

"He's done it already," answered Roy.

"Oh, that's nothing," was the cheerful reply. "Wait till he gets to going. He can be mighty nasty when he tries. And he can be fairly decent, too. He isn't a coward like Otto Ferris, you see; he's got a lot of good stuff in him, only it doesn't very often get out."

"He's a Second Senior, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's been here six years already, too. He isn't much on study, and Emmy gets ripping mad with him sometimes. Two years ago he didn't pass and Emmy told him he'd keep him in the Second Middle for six years if he didn't do better work. So Horace buckled down that time and moved up. Well, say, we paddle back. You stay where you are if you're tired; I can make it against this little old tide all right."

But Roy declared he wasn't tired and took up his paddle again. As they neared the school landing the rowboat came drifting down from the end of the island, the half dozen lads inside of it shouting and laughing loudly. Suddenly Roy started to his feet.

"Sit down!" cried Chub sharply.

Roy sat down, not so much on account of the command as because he had started the canoe to rocking, and it was a choice between doing that and falling into the river.

"Their boat's upset!" he cried back.

"So I see," answered Chub. "But it isn't necessary to upset this one, too. Besides, they can all swim like fishes."

Nevertheless he bent to his paddle and, with Roy making ineffectual efforts to help him, fairly shot the craft over the water. But long before they had neared the overturned boat it became evident that their aid was not required, for the boys in the water, laughing over their mishap, were swimming toward the beach and pushing the capsized boat before them. Chub headed the canoe toward the landing.

"You see," he explained, "no fellow is allowed to get into a boat here until he can swim, and so, barring a swift current, there isn't much danger. That's Sid in front. He's a regular fish in the water

and it's even money that he upset the thing on purpose. He'd better not let Emmy know about it, though. By the way, how about you? Can you swim? I forgot to ask you."

"Yes, I can swim pretty fair," answered Roy.

"All right. I took it for granted you could. You look like a chap that can do things. Do you play baseball?"

"No; that is, I've never played on a team. Of course, I can catch a ball if it's coming my way."

"Good! Why not come out for the nine in the spring? Will you?"

"I don't believe there'd be much use in it," said Roy. "I know so little about the game."

"That's all right. You could learn. Half the fellows who try have never played before. And I know you can start quick and run like a streak. I saw you make that touchdown day before yesterday. You'd better try."

"Well," answered Roy, as they lifted the canoe from the water and bore it into the boat house, "maybe I will. Only I don't think the captain would be very glad to see me."

"Don't you worry about the captain," laughed Chub. "He's too glad to get material to be fussy."

"Who is captain?" asked Roy.

"I am," said Chub. "That's how I know so much about him!"

CHAPTER VI

METHUSELAH HAS A SORE THROAT

Football practice was hard and steady the next week, for Maitland had trounced Ferry Hill 17 to 0, and as Maitland was only a high school, albeit a rather large one, the disgrace rankled. Jack Rogers wasn't the sort of chap to wear his heart on his sleeve, and so far as his countenance went none would have guessed him to be badly discouraged. But he was, and Roy, for one, knew it. And I think Jack knew that he knew it, for once in a lull of the signal practice he looked up to find Roy's eyes on him sympathetically, and he smiled back with a dubious shake of his head that spoke volumes. Things weren't going very well, and that was a fact. The loss of Horace Burlen during that first month of practice meant a good deal, for Horace was a steady center and an experienced one. To a lesser extent the absence of Pryor and Warren, Horace's friends in exile, retarded the development of the team. By the end of the second week of practice a provisional eleven had been formed, for Mr. Cobb believed in getting the men together as soon as possible, having learned from experience that team work is not a thing that can be instilled in a mere week or two of practice. Whitcomb was playing center on the first squad in Horace's absence. Roy was at quarter on the second, with a slow-moving young giant named Forrest in front of him. But Forrest was good-natured as well as slow, and in consequence he and Roy got on very well, although they never exchanged unnecessary remarks. The back field had learned that Jack Rogers would not stand any nonsense, and if they had any desire to make things uncomfortable for the quarter-back they didn't indulge it on the football field. The second stood up very well in those days before the first, in spite of the fact that sometimes there weren't enough candidates to fill the places of injured players. With only forty-odd fellows to draw from it was remarkable that Ferry Hill turned out the teams that it did.

Meanwhile life was growing easier for Roy. Even the younger boys had begun to tire of showing their contempt, while the fact that Chub Eaton had "taken up" the new boy went a long way with the school in general. Chub was not popular in the closest sense of the word; he was far too indifferent for that; but every fellow who knew him at all liked him – with the possible exception of Horace – and his position of baseball captain made him a person of importance. Consequently, when the school observed that Chub had selected Roy for a friend it marvelled for a few days and then began to wonder whether there might not be, after all, extenuating circumstances in the new boy's favor. And besides this Roy's work on the gridiron had been from the first of the sort to command respect no matter how unwilling. And it was about this time that another friend was restored to him.

Roy had come across Harry but once or twice since she had passed him in the campus, and each time he had been very careful to avoid her. But one morning he ran plump into her in the corridor of School Hall, so plump, in fact, that he knocked the book she was carrying from her hand. Of course there was nothing to do but stoop and rescue it from the floor, and when that was done it was too late to escape. As he handed the book back to her he looked defiantly into the blue eyes and said, "Good morning, Miss Harriet." Strange to say, he was not immediately annihilated. Instead the blue eyes smiled at him with a most friendly gleam, and,

"Good morning," said Harry. Then, "Only I oughtn't to answer you for calling me 'Miss Harriet'; you know I hate Harriet."

"Excuse me, I meant Miss *Harry*," answered Roy a trifle stiffly. It was hard to forget that cut direct.

"That's better," she said. "You – you haven't been down to inquire after the health of the baby since you rescued him."

"No, but I hope he's all right?"

"Yes, but Methuselah is awfully sick."

"He's the parrot, isn't he?" asked Roy. "What's wrong with the old sinner?"

"He's got a dreadful sore throat," was the reply. "I've tied it up with a cloth soaked in turpentine half a dozen times, but he just won't let it be."

"Are you sure it's sore throat?" asked Roy gravely.

"Yes, his voice is almost gone. Why, he can scarcely talk above a whisper!"

Roy thought to himself that that wasn't such a catastrophe as Harry intimated, but he was careful not to suggest such a thing to her. Instead he looked properly regretful.

"Don't you want to see him?" asked Harry, in the manner of one conferring an unusual favor. Roy declared that he did and Harry led the way toward the barn, her red hair radiant in the morning sunlight. On the way they passed two of the boys, who observed them with open-eyed surprise. Harry's favor was not easy to win and, being won, something to prize, since she stood near the throne and was popularly believed to be able to command favors for her friends.

Methuselah certainly did look sick. He was perched on the edge of his soap box domicile, viewing the world with pessimistic eyes, when Harry conducted the visitor into the enclosure and sent the pigeons whirling into air. Harry went to him and stroked his head with her finger.

"Poor old 'Thuselah," she murmured. "Did he have a sore throat? Well, it was a nasty, mean shame. But he's a naughty boy for scratching off the bandage Harry put on. What have you done with it? You haven't – " she looked about the box and the ground and then viewed the bird sternly – "you haven't eaten it?"

Methuselah cocked his eyes at her in a world-weary way that seemed to say, "Well, what if I have? I might as well die one way as another." But Roy discovered the bedraggled length of linen a little way off and restored it to Harry.

"I'm so glad!" said the girl with a sigh of relief. "I didn't know but he might have, you know. Why, once he actually ate a whole ounce of turnip seeds!"

"Hurt him?" asked Roy interestedly.

"N-no, I don't believe so, but I was awfully afraid it would. John, the gardener, said he'd have appendicitis. But then, John was mad because he needed the seeds."

Methuselah had closed his eyes and now looked as though resolved to die at once and get it over with. But at that moment Snip trotted out from the barn, where he had been hunting for rats, and hailed Roy as a long-lost friend. Perhaps the incident saved the bird's life. At least it caused him to alter his mind about dying at once, for he blinked his eyes open, watched the performance for a moment and then broke out in a hoarse croak with:

"Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing! Stop your swearing!"

It was such a pathetic apology for a voice that Roy had to laugh even at the risk of wounding Harry's feelings. But Harry, too, found it amusing and joined her laugh with his. Whereupon Methuselah mocked them sarcastically in tones that suggested the indelicacy of laughing at a dying friend.

"I think," said Harry, "he'd like you to scratch his head."

Roy looked doubtfully at the bird and the bird looked suspiciously at Roy, but when the latter had summoned up sufficient courage to allow of the experiment Methuselah closed his eyes and bent his head in evident appreciation and enjoyment.

"I don't believe you're nearly so sick as you're making out," said Roy. "I believe you're an old bluffer."

And the bird actually chuckled!

Harry doused the bandage with turpentine again and once more tied it around Methuselah's neck.

"Now don't you dare scratch it off again," she commanded severely, shaking her finger at him.

"Well, I never – " began the bird. But weariness overcame him in the middle of the sentence and he closed his beady eyes again and nodded sleepily.

"I don't believe he slept very well last night," confided Harry in a whisper.

"Maybe he was cold," Roy suggested.

"I've thought of that. I don't usually move them indoors until much later," said Harry thoughtfully, "but the weather is so cold this Fall that I think I'll put them in to-day. Maybe he's been sleeping in a draft. Mamma says that will almost always give you a sore throat."

They walked back to the cottage together and on the way Harry was unusually quiet. Finally, when Roy had pleaded a recitation, she unburdened her mind and conscience.

"I – I'm sorry about the other day," she said suddenly.

Roy, who had turned away, looked around in surprise.

"I mean when I didn't speak to you one morning," explained Harry bravely. Her cheeks were furiously red and Roy found himself sharing her embarrassment.

"Oh, that's all right," he muttered.

"No, it isn't all right," contradicted Harry. "It was a low-down thing to do and I was sorry right away. Only you didn't look and so – so I – I didn't call you. I – I wish you had looked. It was all Horace's fault. He said – said – "

"Yes, I guess I know what he said," interrupted Roy. "But supposing what he said is so?"

"I wouldn't care – much," was the answer. "But I know it isn't so! Is it?"

Roy dropped his eyes and hesitated. Then,

"No," he muttered. "It isn't so, Harry."

"I knew it!" she cried triumphantly. "I told him I knew it afterwards! And he said girls weren't proper persons to judge of such things, and I don't see what that's got to do with my knowing – what I know, do you?"

Roy had to acknowledge that he didn't.

"And you're not cross with me, are you?" she demanded anxiously.

"Not a bit," he said.

"That's nice. I don't like folks I like to not like – Oh, dear me! I'm all balled up! Only I mustn't say 'balled up.' I meant that I was – confused. Anyway, I'm going to tell all the boys that it isn't so, that you didn't squeal – I mean *tell* – on Horace and the others! And I think it was a nasty trick to play on you! Why, you might have caught your death of cold!"

"Or a sore throat, like Methuselah," said Roy, smiling.

"Or you might have been drowned. Once there was a boy drowned here, a long, long time ago, when I was just a kid. It was very sad. But you weren't drowned, were you? And so there's no use in supposing, is there? But I'm going to tell the boys that – "

"I'd rather you didn't, please, Harry," broke in Roy.

Harry, who was becoming quite enthusiastic and excited, opened her eyes very wide.

"Not tell?" she cried. "Why not?"

"Well," answered Roy hesitatingly, "I – I'd rather you didn't."

"No reason!" said Harry scornfully.

"If they think I'd do such a thing," muttered Roy, "they can just keep on thinking so. I guess I can stand it."

Harry looked puzzled for a moment; she was trying to get at his point of view; then her face lighted.

"Splendid!" she cried. "You're going to be a martyr and be misunderstood like – like somebody in a book I was reading! And some day, long after you're gone – " Harry looked vaguely about as though searching for the place Roy was to go to – "folks will discover that you're innocent and they'll be very, very sorry and erect a white marble shaft to your cherished memory!" She ended much out of breath, but still enthusiastic, to find Roy laughing at her.

"I guess I'm not hankering for any martyr business, Harry. It isn't that exactly; I don't know just what it is. But if you won't say anything about it I'll be awfully much obliged."

"Well, then, I won't," promised Harry regretfully. "Only I do wish you were going to be a martyr!"

"I shall be if I don't hurry," answered Roy. "I have math with Mr. Buckman in about half a minute."

"Pooh! No one's afraid of Buck!" said Harry scornfully. "Cobby's the one to look out for; he's awfully strict." Roy was already making for School Hall. "You'll come and see Methuselah again soon, won't you?"

"Yes," called Roy.

"And you'll play tennis with me some day, too?"

"I don't play very well."

"Never mind," answered Harry, "I'll teach you. Good bye!"

CHAPTER VII

COACHES AND PLAYERS

October went its way, a period of bright, crisp, golden weather filled with hard work for the football players. There were defeats and victories both in that early season, but on the whole the team showed up fairly well. Burlen and Warren and Pryor returned to practice at the end of their probation and, although each was more or less stale, their presence in accustomed positions heartened the team. Otto Ferris, too, returned, but his advent was not portentous, since the best he could do was to make the second as a substitute back. Bacon still held his place at quarter, although in two games he had been kept out of the play, his position being filled by Roy. The latter had done excellent work, but he had not had the experience gained by Bacon, and this, together with the fact that he and Horace did not work smoothly together, made it pretty certain that Bacon would go into the game with Hammond. Roy was not greatly disappointed, for he had scarcely dared hope to make the first team that Fall. Next year Bacon would be gone from school, and then, barring accidents, the place would be his. Meanwhile, ever mindful of his promise to Jack Rogers, Roy worked like a Trojan on the second and ran that team in such a way that a score against the first at least every other day of practice became something to expect. Had Roy been able to work with Horace as he did with Forrest, Bacon's position would not have been so secure. Roy was like a streak of lightning when he once got away for a run, and, like a streak of lightning, was mighty hard to catch. At this he quite outplayed Bacon. The latter seldom managed to make his quarter-back runs tell, but he knew his men from long experience and used them like a general.

Chub Eaton, inspired by his friendship for Roy, became a regular attendant at practice and even travelled on more than one occasion to a neighboring town with the team. Chub, however, didn't approve of Roy's presence on the second.

"It's all poppycock," he declared warmly. "You can play all around Bacon and I don't understand why Cobb and Jack don't see it. You're too easy-going, Roy. You ought to make a kick; tell 'em you want what's coming to you; make 'em give you a fair try-out on the first. I tell you, my young friend, you don't gain anything in this world by being over-modest. Get out and flap your wings and crow a few times till they take notice of you!"

At all of which Roy smiled calmly.

The two had become inseparable. Whenever it was possible they were together. In the evening they sat side by side in the study room and afterwards Roy spent his time on the edge of Chub's bed in the Junior Dormitory until the bell rang. There were many stolen hours in the canoe and always, rain or shine, Sunday afternoon found them on the river, floating down with the stream or paddling about the shores engaged in wonderful explorations.

Roy had recovered from his first nervousness regarding studies and was getting on fairly well. He was never likely to astonish any of the instructors with his brilliancy, but what he once learned he remembered and he was conscientious where studies were concerned. His mother mentioned the scholarship less frequently nowadays in her letters and his father asked sarcastically whether they taught anything besides football at Ferry Hill, but was secretly very proud of his son's success in that line.

So November came in with a week of chill, wet days, days when outdoor practice meant handling a slippery ball and rolling about in puddles of water, but which sent them in to supper with outrageous appetites.

Green Academy came and saw and conquered, Pottsville High School was sent home beaten, Cedar Cove School was defeated by a single point – Jack himself kicked the goal that did it – and

lo, the schedule was almost at an end, with only the big game of the season, that with Hammond, looming up portentously ten days distant!

The whole school was football mad. Every afternoon of practice saw boys and instructors on the field either playing or watching; only severe illness kept a Ferry Hill student away from the field those days. Every afternoon some graduate or other appeared in a faded brown sweater and after watching practice awhile suddenly darted into the fracas and laid down the law. And there were long and earnest consultations afterwards between the grad and Jack and Mr. Cobb, and fellows who were not too certain of their places trembled in their muddy shoes. And there were changes, too, in the line-up, and more than one pair of muddy shoes either went to the side-line or scuffled about with the second. But only one of the changes became permanent; for Mr. Cobb had selected well. Roy never forgot the day when Johnny King made his appearance.

It was just a week to a day before the Hammond game. Roy was one of the first on the field that afternoon, but Jack and Mr. Cobb were ahead of him, and with them was a big, broad-shouldered youth in his shirt sleeves. Roy groaned in sympathy with the first team, knowing from experience that they would have an unpleasant time of it. The grad had the look of a chap who knew football, knew what he wanted and was bound to have it. Then the players assembled, went through a few minutes of catching and punting and signal line-up, and finally faced each other in two eager, determined lines. Mr. Cobb blew his whistle and the first came through the second for a yard outside of left tackle. By this time Roy had learned the identity of the graduate, and when he could he examined him with interest, remembering what Jack Rogers had told of the last year's captain. For awhile King had little to say; he merely followed the game as it went back and forth in the middle of the field. Then came a try around the second's left end and Roy, running in, brought the first's left half-back to earth. The tackle was a hard one and the half-back lost the ball and sprang to his feet to find Roy edging toward the first's goal with it under his arm. It was the second's first down then, and Roy sent full-back crashing against the opposing left-guard for a yard and a half. That began an advance that the first was unable to stay. Roy was everywhere, and time and again, when the whistle had blown, he was found at the bottom of the heap still trying to pull the runner ahead. But a fumble by the second's left-tackle, who had been drawn back for a plunge, changed the tide and the ball went back to the first almost under her goal posts. A halt was called, Johnny King conferred a moment with Mr. Cobb and Roy was summoned to the first, Bacon slipping across to the other line. But Roy could have told King then and there that the change wouldn't pay, for he knew Horace Burlen. And it didn't. King frowned and puzzled during three plays. Then his brow lighted.

"Change those centers," he commanded.

Forrest, amazed and embarrassed by the unexpected honor, changed places with Horace.

"Somebody tell him the key number for the signals," said King. "Forrest, let's see you wake up; you're slower than you were last year. Now get in there and do something!"

And Forrest smiled good-naturedly and bent over the ball.

Things went better at once, and, Forrest and Roy working together like well fitted parts of a machine, the ball went down the field on straight plays and over the line for the first score. But Forrest had to work, for Horace, smarting under the indignity of a return to the second, fought over every inch of the ground. The ball was taken from the first and given to Bacon. And then there was a different story to tell. Bacon piled his men through center, Horace getting the jump on Forrest every time and crashing through in spite of the efforts of the secondary defense. King shook his head and frowned. Then he called Jack Rogers out of the line and talked to him for a minute, while the players repaired broken laces and had their heated faces sponged off. Roy, making the rounds of the men, cheering and entreating, caught by accident a portion of the conversation between the two.

"That's where you've made your mistake," King was saying sorrowfully. "You've failed to see the possibilities in Forrest. Slow? Sure he is; slow as an ice wagon! But you could have knocked a lot of that out of him. He's too good-natured; I know the sort; but mark my words, Jack, if you can

get him mad he'll play like a whirlwind! Oh, it's too late now; Bacon and Burlen are your best pair. Only – well, there's no use regretting. You've picked a pretty good team, old man, and if you can ginger them up a bit more, get more fight into them next Saturday, you'll stand to win. Remember this, Jack; a fresh center that knows the game, even if he is slow, is better than a tuckered one. Give Forrest a chance in the second half, if you can; and put Porter in with him. They're a good pair. Too bad Porter can't work better with Burlen; he's a streak, that kid! Well – "

Roy moved out of hearing and presently he and Forrest were back on the second and they were hammering their way down the field again. The first fifteen-minute half ended with the ball in possession of the second on the first's twenty-yard line. The players trotted to the side-line and crept under their blankets and sweaters, King and Rogers and Cobb talking and gesticulating a little way off. Roy found himself next to Forrest. The center, rubbing thoughtfully at a strained finger, heaved a sigh.

"Sorry I disappointed Johnny," he said. "But, shucks! Why, I couldn't stand up ten minutes against that Hammond center! I know what I'm good for, Porter; I don't try to deceive myself into thinking I'm a great player; only – well, I'm sorry I couldn't do better for Johnny King."

"You'll do a heap better next Saturday," answered Roy.

"Pshaw! They won't let me into it!"

"You wait and see," said Roy. "And if you go in I guess I will. And if we do get into it, Forrest, let's show them what we can do, will you?"

Forrest turned and observed the other's earnest countenance smilingly.

"I'll do the best I know how," he said good-naturedly, "but I guess they'll do better to leave me out."

"Oh, you be hanged!" grunted Roy. "You'll fight or I'll punch you!"

"Oh, I guess I'll get my fill of punches," laughed Forrest. "They say that Hammond center is a corker at that game!"

"I believe you're scared of him," taunted Roy.

But Forrest only shook his big head slowly.

"Oh, I guess not," he answered. "Come on; time's up."

The first scored again soon after play was resumed, Jack Rogers getting through outside left-tackle for a twelve-yard plunge across the line. Then the ball went to the second and, with the injunction to confine his plays to straight plunges at the line, Roy took up the fight. But the first were playing their very best to-day; perhaps the presence of the old captain had a good deal to do with it; at all events, the second's gains were few and far between and several times it lost the ball only to have it returned by order of the coaches. They were trying out the first's defense and although twice Roy stood inside of the first's ten-yard line, the practice ended without a score for the second.

"I thought you'd made the first that time," said Chub as he and Roy walked back to the campus together later. "You would have, too, if Horace hadn't passed like an idiot."

"I knew he would," said Roy. "There wasn't much use trying to do anything with him in front of me. If only Forrest would get some snap into his playing! Great Scott, he's a regular tortoise!"

"Well, there's a week yet," said Chub hopefully. "There's no telling what may happen in a week."

"There won't anything happen as far as I am concerned," answered the other a trifle despondently.

Nor did there. When practice was over on Thursday Roy stood with the second and answered the cheer given them by the first, and afterwards he and Forrest walked over to the gymnasium together trying not to feel blue.

"Well, that's over with for this year," grunted Forrest. "Tomorrow we'll be gentlemen and strut around in some decent clothes." He looked thoughtfully at his torn and faded brown jersey. "I guess this is the last time I'll wear you, old chap," he said softly.

But Forrest was mistaken, for the next afternoon he and Roy and four other members of the second were out on the gridiron again walking through plays and learning the new signals of the first. Jack Rogers wasn't going to lose the morrow's game on account of lack of players. There was a solid hour and a quarter of it, and when Roy went to bed at half-past nine, a half hour earlier than usual, formations and signals were still buzzing through his brain.

The gridiron, freshly marked, glistened under bright sunlight. November could not have been kinder in the matter of weather. There had been no hard freeze since the rains and the field was as springy under foot as in September. Over on the far side a big cherry and black flag fluttered briskly in the breeze and beneath it, overflowing from the small stand onto the yellowing turf, were Hammond's supporters. Opposite were the Ferry Hill hordes under their brown and white banner and with them a sprinkling of townfolk from Silver Cove. Here were Doctor Emery, Mrs. Emery and Harry, the latter armed with a truculent brown and white banner; nearby was Mr. Buckman acting as squire to a group of ladies from the town. Beyond was Roy, one of a half-dozen blanketed forms; still further along, squatting close to the side-line, was Chub Eaton, and from where he sat down to the farther thirty-yard line boys with brown and white flags and tin horns were scattered. And between the opposing ranks were two dozen persons upon whom all eyes were fixed. Eleven of them wore the brown jerseys and brown and white striped stockings of Ferry Hill School. Eleven others wore the cherry-colored jerseys and cherry and black stockings of Hammond Academy. Two more were in ordinary attire save that sweaters had taken the places of coats. These latter were the officials, both college men, the umpire showing in his sweater the light red of Cornell, and the referee, by the same means, proving allegiance to Columbia. The two teams had been facing each other for fifteen minutes, during which time the ball had hovered continuously in mid-field. And now for the fourth time it had changed hands and Bacon was crying his signals. From the Ferry Hill supporters came a rattling cheer; "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Ferry Hill! Ferry Hill! Ferry Hill!"

And from across the field of battle swept back, mocking and defiant, Hammond's parody "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah rah, rah! Very Ill! Very Ill! Very Ill!"

Then cheers were forgotten, for Kirby, Ferry Hill's full-back, was tearing a gash in the red line outside of right-guard. He was almost free of the enemy when Pool, the opposing quarter, dragged him down. But twelve yards is something to gladden the heart when for a quarter of an hour half-yard gains have been the rule. Ferry Hill forgot to cheer; she just yelled, each boy for himself, and it was more than a minute before Chub, leading, could get them together. This time Hammond forgot to mock and instead sent up a long, lusty slogan that did her credit:

"Rah, rah, rah! Who are we? H-A-M-M-O-N-D! Hoorah, Hoorah! Hammond Academy! Rah, rah, rah!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.